

## Types of Local Ecumenical and Interreligious Involvement

There are many different ways for leaders in The United Methodist Church to encourage ecumenical and Interreligious engagement. Locally, there are often several options. If none of the following exists, however, United Methodist clergy and laity are encouraged to start unity movements. Some ideas to consider include the following:

**Church to Church Connection:** Both laity and clergy can be intentionally involved in Christian unity and interreligious relationships in their contexts and neighborhoods. United Methodists can be catalysts for community mercy and justice ministries; shared worship services; joint Bible studies; visits to each other's houses of worship; and disaster response ministries. A local pastor or lay leader can get started by simply reaching out to someone in another faith community and asking if they might study together or be in ministry together in some way needed in the area.

**Local Conciliar Bodies:** The United Methodist Church participates fully in several councils and relationship-building organizations. Many of these groups find expression within the areas of our annual conferences and districts. Pastors and lay people can look in their area for ministerial associations, ecumenical or interfaith covenant groups, study groups, councils of churches, and interfaith communities.

**Opportunities for Study:** There are several regular events and gatherings in which United Methodists can be engaged. In the United States, for example, there is an annual UMEIT (United Methodist Ecumenical and Interreligious Training) event that is held parallel to the National Workshop on Christian Unity. UMEIT USA, led by a team working with the Council of Bishops ecumenical staff, is open to all who wish to register and is an excellent avenue for learning about what is happening in ecumenical in interreligious ministry currently.

**The National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA** sponsors a Christianity Unity Gathering each year. And Christian Churches Together sponsors an annual themed plenary, part of which is open to all interested.

### **National Council of Churches Indiana Partners for Christian Unity & Mission**

- [Associated Churches of Fort Wayne & Allen County](#)
- [Christian Ministries of Delaware County](#) (Muncie)
- [Church Community Services](#) (Elkhart)
- [Church Federation of Greater Indianapolis, Inc.](#)
- [Hope Southern Indiana](#)
- [United Religious Community of St. Joseph County](#) (South Bend)

**Church Re-organizations:** When small congregations shrink to the point of becoming ineffective in making disciples of Jesus Christ, congregations can suggest options to their district superintendents. Our United Methodist Book of Discipline offers options for union and sharing with other local denominations. Paragraph 206 in the Book of Discipline explains the organization of "Cooperative Parishes." Paragraph 207 outlines "Ecumenical Shared Ministries." **Paragraph 208** explains the concepts of "Federated churches", "union churches", "merged churches", and "yoked parishes."

**Most importantly, Prayer and Worship** are ways in which United Methodists are called to be involved ecumenically and interreligiously. Local congregations can pray for their neighbor churches and other houses of worship every Sunday during the time of pastoral prayer. Joint worship services can be held on special occasions, such as Thanksgiving, Epiphany and/or Easter.